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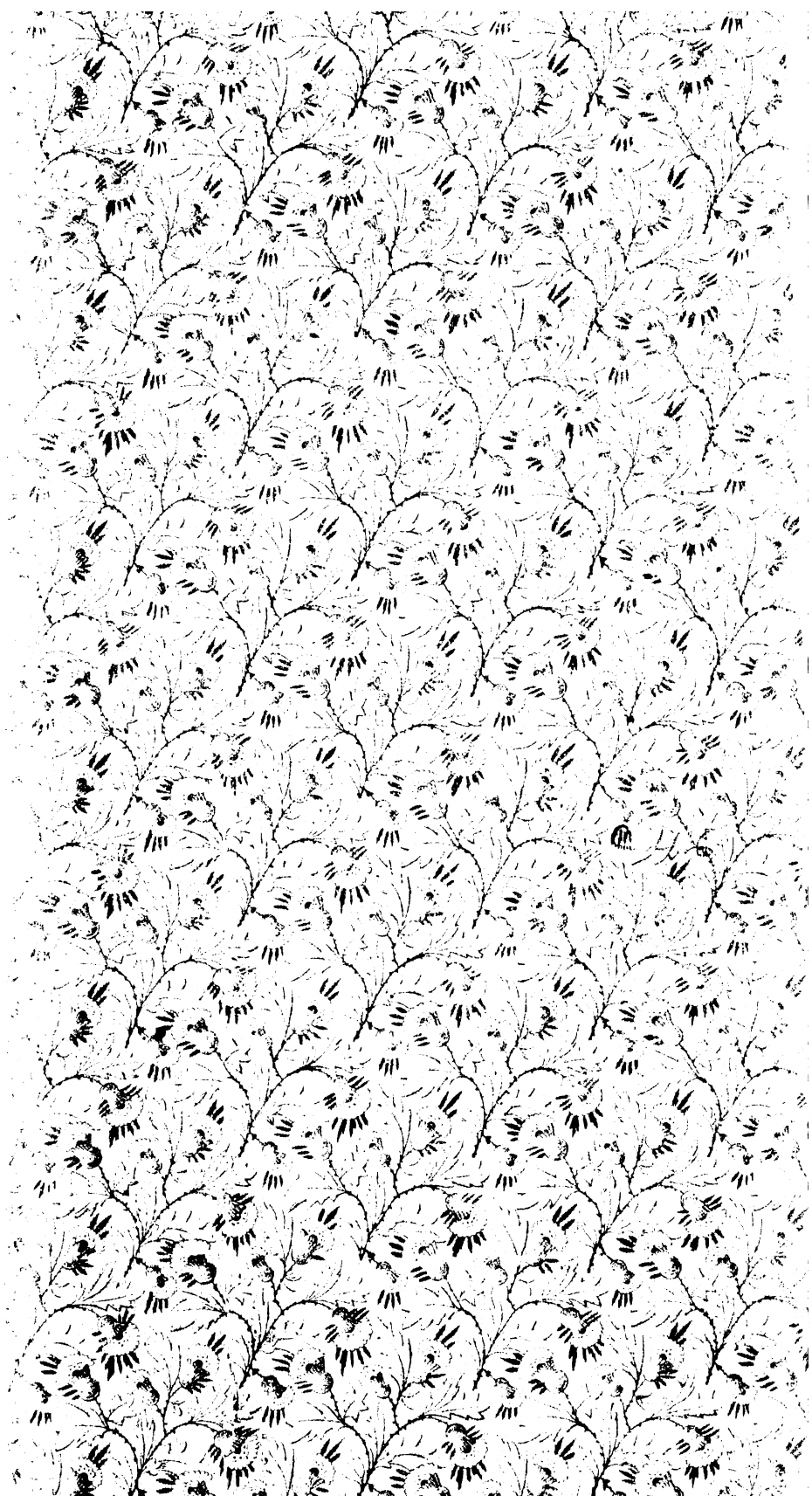
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Letter to W. E. Channing
on Religious Liberty -
By Moses Stuart -

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LETTER

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TO

WILLIAM E. CHANNING · D. D.

ON THE SUBJECT OF

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

BY MOSES STUART

Professor of Sac. Literature in the Theol. Seminary, Andover.

Boston:

PERKINS & MARVIN, No. 114, WASHINGTON ST.

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A Letter to William E. Channing, D. D. on the subject of Religious Liberty.
By Moses Stuart, Professor of Sacred Literature in the Theological Seminary, Andover.

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JNO. W. DAVIS, { Clerk of the District
of Massachusetts.

LETTER.

REVEREND SIR,

IN perusing the volume which you have recently published, entitled 'Discourses, Reviews, and Miscellanies,' and also in reading your 'Election Sermon' recently delivered before the Legislature of this State, I have met with some passages which contain charges, expressed or implied, against the denomination of Christians in Massachusetts who are called *Orthodox* or *Trinitarians*, that seem to me to deserve serious and candid examination. If they are indeed well founded, it is proper that the community should know it; nor can it be taken amiss, that you have given your name to the world as a pledge that they can be established and made good. But if they have no foundation in point of fact, you will join with me in saying that they ought in justice no longer to pass current under the sanction of your name, but that the public should be correctly informed respecting them.

Passages in your recently published works, of the nature to which I have above adverted, are somewhat numerous. But as it is not my object to multiply quotations, or to dispute about words, I shall content myself in this place with making merely a few extracts.

My first extract shall be from your Election Sermon recently published.

"You have all heard of the outward evils, which religion, when thus turned into tyranny, has inflicted; how it has dug dreary dungeons, kindled fires for the martyr, and invented instruments of exquisite torture. But to me all this is less fearful than its influence over the mind. When I see the superstitions which it has fastened on the conscience, the spiritual terrors with which it has haunted and subdued the ignorant and susceptible, the dark appalling views of God which it has spread far and wide, the dread of inquiry which it has struck into superior understandings, and the servility of spirit which it has made to pass for piety,—when I see all this, the fire, the scaffold, and the outward inquisition, terrible as they are, seem to me inferior evils. I look with a solemn joy on the heroic spirits, who have met freely and fearlessly pain and death in the cause of truth and human rights. But there are other victims of intolerance, on whom I look with unmixed sorrow. They are those, who, spell-bound by early prejudice or by intimidations from the pulpit and the press, dare not think; who anxiously stifle every doubt or misgiving in regard to their opinions, as if to doubt were a crime; who shrink from the seekers after truth as from infection; who deny all virtue, which does not wear the livery of their own sect; who, surrendering to others their best powers, receive unresistingly a teaching which wars against reason and conscience; and who think it a merit to impose on such as live within their influence, the grievous bondage, which they bear themselves. How much to be deplored is it, that religion, the very principle which is designed to raise men above the judgment and power of man, should become the chief instrument of usurpation over the soul.

"Is it said, that, in this country, where the rights of private judgment and of speaking and writing according to our convictions, are guaranteed with every solemnity by institutions and laws, religion can never degenerate into tyranny; that here its whole influence must conspire to the liberation and dignity of the mind? I answer, we discover little knowledge of human nature, if we ascribe to constitutions the power of charming to sleep the spirit of intolerance and exclusion. Almost every other bad passion may sooner be put to rest; and for this plain reason, that intolerance always shelters itself under the name and garb of religious zeal. Because we live in a country, where the gross, outward, visible chain is broken, we must not conclude that we are necessarily free. There are chains not made of iron, which eat more deeply into the soul. An espionage of bigotry may as effectually close our lips and chill our hearts, as an armed and hundred-eyed police. There are countless ways by which men in a free country may encroach on their neighbours' rights. In religion the instrument is ready made and always at hand. I refer to Opinion, combined and organized in sects, and swayed by the clergy. We say we have no Inquisition. But a sect, skilfully organized, trained to utter one cry, combined to cover with reproach whoever may differ from themselves, to drown the free expression of opinion by denunciations of heresy, and to strike terror into the multitude

by joint and perpetual menace,—such a sect is as perilous and palsying to the intellect as the Inquisition. It serves the minister as effectually as the sword. The present age is notoriously sectarian, and therefore hostile to liberty.”—pp. 25—28.

Again, in the newly printed volume of your Discourses, &c. you say ;

“ We do not deny, that our brethren have a right to form a judgment as to our Christian character. But we insist that we have a right to be judged by the fairest, the most approved, and the most settled rules, by which character can be tried ; and when these are overlooked, and the most uncertain standard is applied, we are injured ; and an assault on character, which rests on this ground, deserves no better name than defamation and persecution.

“ I know that this suggestion of persecution will be indignantly repelled by those, who deal most largely in denunciation. But persecution is a wrong or injury inflicted for opinions ; and surely assaults on character fall under this definition. Some persons seem to think, that persecution consists in pursuing error with fire and sword ; and that therefore it has ceased to exist, except in distempered imaginations, because no class of Christians among us is armed with these terrible weapons. But no. The form is changed, but the spirit lives. Persecution has given up its halter and fagot, but it breathes venom from its lips, and secretly blasts what it cannot openly destroy.—pp. 561, 562.

In the same volume, when speaking (as in the preceding extract) against a “ system of exclusion and denunciation in religion,” you make the following remarks ;

“ Another important consideration is, that this system of excluding men of apparent sincerity, for their opinions, entirely subverts free inquiry into the scriptures. When once a particular system is surrounded by this bulwark ; when once its defenders have brought the majority to believe, that the rejection of it is a mark of depravity and perdition, what but the name of liberty is left to Christians ? The obstacles to inquiry are as real, and may be as powerful, as in the neighborhood of the Inquisition. The multitude dare not think, and the thinking dare not speak. The right of private judgment may thus, in a Protestant country, be reduced to a nullity. It is true, that men are sent to the scriptures ; but they are told before they go, that they will be driven from the church on earth and in heaven, unless they find in the scriptures the doctrines which are embodied in the popular creed. They are told, indeed, to inquire for themselves ; but they are also told, at what points inquiry must arrive ; and the sentence of exclusion hangs over them, if they happen to stray, with some of the best and wisest men, into forbidden paths. Now this ‘ Protestant liberty ’ is, in one respect, more irritating than Papal bondage. It mocks as well as enslaves us. It talks to us courteously as friends and brethren, whilst it rivets our chains. It invites and even charges us to look with our own eyes, but with the same breath warns us against

seeing anything which Orthodox eyes have not seen before us. Is this a state of things favorable to serious inquiry into the truths of the gospel; yet, how long has the church been groaning under this cruel yoke?

"Another objection to this system of excluding professed disciples of Christ, on account of their opinions, is, that it is inconsistent with the great principles of Congregationalism. In churches, where the power is lodged in a few individuals, who are supposed to be the most learned men in the community, the work of marking out and excluding the erroneous may seem less difficult. But among Congregationalists, the tribunal before which the offender is to be brought is the whole church, consisting partly of men in humble circumstances, and of unimproved minds; partly of men engaged in active and pressing business; and partly of men of education, whose studies have been directed to law and medicine. Now is this a tribunal, before which the most intricate points of theology are to be discussed, and serious inquirers are to answer for opinions, which they have perhaps examined more laboriously and faithfully than all their judges? Would a church of humble men, conscious of their limited opportunities, consent to try, for these pretended crimes, professing Christians, as intelligent, as honest, and as exemplary as themselves? It is evident, that in the business of excluding men for opinions, a church can be little more than the tool of the minister, or a few influential members; and our churches are, in general, too independent and too upright to take this part in so solemn a transaction. To correct their deficiencies, and to quicken their zeal on this point, we are now threatened with new tribunals, or Consociations, whose office it will be to try ministers for their errors, to inspect the churches, and to advise and assist them in the extirpation of 'heresy.' Whilst the laity are slumbering, the ancient and free constitution of our churches is silently undermined, and is crumbling away. Since argument is insufficient to produce uniformity of opinion, recourse must be had to more powerful instruments of conviction; I mean, to ECCLESIASTICAL COURTS. And are this people indeed prepared to submit to this most degrading form of vassalage; a vassalage, which reaches and palsies the mind, and imposes on it the dreams and fictions of men, for the everlasting truth of God?"—pp. 565, 566.

Once more, in your preface to the same volume, you say;

"It is due to myself to say, that the controversial character of a part of this volume, is to be ascribed, not to the love of disputation, but to the circumstances in which I was called to write. It was my lot to enter on public life at a time when this part of the country was visited, by what I esteem one of its sorest scourges; I mean, by a revival of the spirit of intolerance and persecution. I saw the commencement of those systematic efforts, which have been since developed, for fastening on the community a particular creed. Opinions, which I thought true and purifying, were not only assailed as errors, but branded as crimes. Then began, what seems to me one of the gross immoralities of our times, the practice of aspersing the characters of exemplary men, on the ground of differences of opinion as to the most mysterious articles of faith. Then began those assaults on freedom of thought

and speech, which, had they succeeded, would have left us only the name of religious liberty. Then it grew perilous to search the scriptures for ourselves, and to speak freely according to the conviction of our own minds. I saw that penalties, as serious in this country as fine and imprisonment, were, if possible, to be attached to the profession of liberal views of Christianity, the penalties of general hatred and scorn; and that a degrading uniformity of opinion was to be imposed by the severest persecution, which the spirit of the age would allow. At such a period, I dared not be silent. To oppose what I deemed error was to me a secondary consideration. My first duty, as I believed, was, to maintain practically and resolutely the rights of the human mind; to live and to suffer, if to suffer were necessary, for that intellectual and religious liberty, which I prize incomparably more than my civil rights. I felt myself called, not merely to plead in general for freedom of thought and speech, but, what was more important and trying, to assert this freedom by action. I should have felt myself disloyal to truth and freedom, had I confined myself to vague commonplaces about our rights, and forborne to bear my testimony expressly and specially to proscribed and persecuted opinions. The times required that a voice of strength and courage should be lifted up, and I rejoice, that I was found among those by whom it was uttered and sent far and wide."—pp. vii. viii.

On the tenor and spirit of these accusations throughout, (which however only accord with a multitude of other passages in your writings), it is not my purpose here to remark in a particular manner. I reserve what I have more specially to say respecting these, to another part of the present letter.

I trust you will have the ingenuousness to avow at once, that it was your intention in these passages, and in others of the like nature, to characterize the efforts, the arguments, the designs, and the cause of those who are usually denominated *Orthodox* or *Trinitarians* in this Commonwealth.

You will permit me, in the following pages, to name the class of men *Orthodox*, to whom I here advert, and to call their liberal opponents *Unitarians*. I do this merely for the sake of convenience and brevity; not for the sake of making any claims for one party, or of casting any odium on the other, by the use of such appellations.

In the above extracts then, (as often elsewhere), you have charged the *Orthodox* with a settled, steadfast, unrelenting purpose to suppress all free inquiry respecting matters of religion, to cover with reproach those who may differ from

themselves, to drown the free expression of opinion by denunciations of heresy, and to strike terror into the multitude by joint and perpetual menace. In addition to all this, you represent them as saying ; " Since argument is insufficient to produce uniformity of opinion, recourse must be had to more powerful instruments of conviction, to ECCLESIASTICAL COURTS."

If there could be any doubt whom you mean to characterize, in the passages extracted from your Election Sermon, and from the preface to the volume of your Works, the declarations in the Appendix to this volume, in the piece which commences on page 557, put the matter beyond all controversy. I will not therefore expend any time in laboring to establish a point so perfectly clear. I take it for granted that you yourself are altogether too frank and ingenuous, even to pretend that you did not mean to characterize Orthodox Christians in general throughout this State, and in particular the clergy who belong to this denomination of Christians. And I take this for granted, because I cannot help believing that no Unitarian who reads your writings, has ever once suspected, or ever will suspect, that you meant to characterize any other than the Orthodox ; and no Orthodox man who reads the whole of your works, can possibly suppose otherwise. You aim at *real* existences, not *imaginary, future, fantastic* ones ; I mean those which you believe to be real. The friends with whom I am accustomed to think and act, do not once suspect you of laying out your energies, in belaboring what you believe to be " a man of straw."

For myself then, as one among the denomination of the Orthodox, I take my full share of all the remarks which you have made against them. One and all of my brethren, with whom I am united in sentiment and affection, feel, so far as I know, in the same manner as I do, with respect to the design of your remarks. We understand you to aim these accusations directly at us ; for it does not signify to go round and round this matter, as afraid to look at it or to

touch it. We know that the accusation and reproaches are intended to strike us ; and we stand up, without a blush or a trembling nerve, before the tribunal of denunciation where you have arraigned us, to hear our sentence with that fortitude, we would fain hope, which it becomes those to exercise who sincerely believe that they are in the right. If we now take the liberty to move an arrest of your judgment, we hope you will not refuse us a hearing. It is natural, you know, for men who are accused of crimes that are *capital* as to *reputation* if not as to life, to appeal, in case of condemnation, to a higher tribunal, if such appeal be lawful ; and if not, to move an arrest of judgment, when the verdict or sentence does not agree with facts and evidence. Above all will they do this, when they know the accusations to be wholly ungrounded, and that they are truly innocent of the matters laid to their charge.

I acknowledge, indeed, that a few solitary passages are found in your writings, in which you seem to manifest a little relenting on the subject of the severe and high wrought language with which you reproach me and my brethren. You sometimes say, that you aim not at *Calvinists*, but at *Calvinism* ; that there are men among the party whom you oppose, whose hearts are better than their heads, and whose religious character you feel bound to respect ; and other things of the like nature. But such declarations are “few and far between.” They seem most evidently to be the result of mere constraint, when they do appear ; constraint arising probably from a sense of decorum, and apparently too from an apprehension, that a strenuous advocate of *liberality* does not appear altogether to the best advantage, while he is uttering indiscriminate condemnation against more than one half of the community in which he lives, and which, if it be well grounded, falls with more justice still and with heavier weight, on the blessed Pilgrims who laid the foundation of his country’s happy freedom and greatness.

It is my most serious conviction, arising from a perusal of your writings *as a whole*, that no one can justly affirm us to be under obligation to you on the score of benevolence and kindness, because of the *exceptions* to which I have just referred. A native Fellah of Egypt being in company with a recent European traveller there of great spirit and intelligence, he was asked by the latter, (who had been expatiating in praise of the Bashaw of Egypt, and on the happy, flourishing, and safe condition of the country), whether he did not agree with him as to the munificent and generous character of his sovereign. To this the Fellah replied, with a most significant look, and elevating his hands toward heaven; "God is great! Our lord, the Bashaw, gives with *one* hand, and takes away with *two*." So it is, my dear Sir, with your praise. In some solitary passages, you allow for decency's sake, and in order to save the appearance of *liberality*, that there are some among us who have a share of common sense in respect to most subjects, and a few that have a little smattering of what the world deems learning; possibly two or three Orthodox individuals may be found, in the whole State, that have a small degree of cultivated taste. But in other passages almost without number, you rank the whole together, and fearlessly avow that none but bigots, and those who have bid adieu to what little understanding they possessed, can be found in the ranks of Orthodoxy. And what is more than all, some of your partial friends applaud this, and call it bold and fearless declaration of the truth, and the development of high and commanding genius.

I cannot say, however, that I feel any gratitude for such concessions. It lies on the face of your writings, that they are against the tenor of your habitual feelings and views, which (in respect to us) are most manifestly those of scorn, of indignation, and of unsparing severity. You give with *one* hand, but take away with *two*. For one, I am unable to bring my mind to an attitude, in which such gifts can be gratefully accepted. If it be my fault, may heaven forgive

me for it! But I am as yet ignorant of its being a fault. I have been accustomed to suppose, and do still believe, that in a land of religious freedom, the Orthodox have as good a right to *maintain* the doctrines of the Pilgrims, as Unitarians have to *assail* them; and that the time has not yet come, when any one individual, however exalted in his own view or in that of his party, can by sweeping denunciations and accusations crush all who venture to oppose him. Sir, you could not have committed a greater mistake than to assume the place of that individual; to consign us over to the ranks of those, who are plotting against the dearest rights of all who have any respect for religion; to hold us up to the world as combined to oppress and to enslave (in a religious respect) our fellow citizens; and then to deliver us over to the execration of all honest men, who prize Christian liberty and social freedom.

There is no denying that you have done this. It stands in high relief in the preceding extracts, which you cannot disavow. More especially you cannot disavow them, because most of them are not the hasty effusions of moments when excitement was urging on the thoughts and the pen and the press, but they are declarations *reviewed* and *republished* to the world after a series of years, in which, as one would naturally suppose, anger had time to cool and resentment to be disarmed. They are written in characters so large and plain, that 'he who runneth may read.' Nor did you, when you penned them, believe or expect that Unitarians would misinterpret them. I cannot refrain from believing that you did *bonâ fide* mean them to speak, what they plainly appear to speak.

And now, when called before such a tribunal, and loaded with denunciations which if credited would forever blast our character and ruin our influence with the community, we do not confess the justice of our sentence, nor acquiesce in it as passed by a court which is the legitimate and ultimate source of jurisdiction. We have a right to appeal, and we

do make the appeal, to the public, to honest and candid men of all classes and parties, we care not what their name may be, from the accusations that you have so often and with such unexampled severity proffered against us, and from the sweeping judgment of excision (excision as to all respect or affection or confidence due to us) which you have so often pronounced.

I say *we* here, not because I am deputed by my brethren to perform the task of writing this pamphlet, (for this is not the case); but because I know their sentiments and feelings on these subjects. None of my brethren had even any knowledge that I was engaged in this work, until it was completed. So I cannot be accused of acting in *concert*, or of being urged on by the calls of party. But knowing them as I do, I venture here to speak in their behalf as well as my own. Whatever is wrong in this letter, they and the public must put to my account alone. Whatever is just and true, may be considered as spoken in behalf of all my injured brethren as well as myself.

We are accused of a settled design to invade the religious liberties of this community, and to force upon them, sooner or later, a creed which was framed in the dark ages, and is worthy only of them. We are charged with an intention to erect *ecclesiastical courts*, which, like the Inquisition of old, are by terror and compulsion to bring this whole Commonwealth to one uniform system of religious doctrine.

Such allegations it is proper that we should meet; and in order to do this, I shall begin with an open declaration and avowal of our sentiments on the subject of religious liberty. I cannot indeed vouch for it, that every man in this State who is named Orthodox, will subscribe to the following sentiments. But this I can say fully, that all among the Orthodox with whom I am acquainted, whether of the clergy or of the laity, do for substance agree in the principles of religious freedom that I am now to propose. All against whom I suppose the denunciations in your works are

specially directed, I have the pleasure of being more or less acquainted with ; and I know well their feelings and views. I venture therefore to say *we* ; and I am fully confident, that the avowal made in this manner cannot be contradicted by any credible evidence whatever.

Let us come then to the *sentiments* of the Orthodox, in regard to *religious liberty*. I will be as brief as the nature of the case admits. You will pardon me, however, for being somewhat *particular* and *specific*, because I wish to be definitely understood, and to allow of no room for misinterpretation.

1. *We hold that every individual has a perfect right to examine and decide for himself, what his own religious sentiments or creed shall be.*

We mean by this, that no law of the land, no public authority or tribunals, and no private combination or society of men to which he has not voluntarily attached himself, shall have any power to demand from him any religious creed whatever, i. e. no power shall compel him to profess any creed, by civil penalty either in respect to his person, his property, or his civil or social rights. We are far from believing that religion has no connection with the prosperity and stability of government. We do fully believe that no good government on earth can be long maintained and be stable, without piety among its subjects. But this is an influence of religion on government and a connection with it, which are *indirect*. We do not hold to the expediency, or propriety, or safety, of committing in any sense to the civil government the disposal of religious matters, in respect either to faith or modes of worship. The only power which we wish ever to see them possess, is, that they may check what is indecent, or hurtful to the public morals, or dangerous to peace on account of the injury which it does to others. But this we would always desire to see effected, rather as an offence that is indictable at common law than by statute. We wish always to see civil government pro-

tect all its citizens in the peaceful enjoyment of their religious privileges ; to do this, on the same ground that we should wish to see its subjects protected with respect to any other rights that are dear to them. We mean that the Mahometan even, and the Jew, and the Deist, as well as the Christian, should have the liberty of worshipping in his own way among us, so long as they demean themselves peaceably, and do not invade the rights of others. We know of *no exception* to participation in *civil* and *social* rights, and *the right of worshipping in our own way*, or of even *not worshipping in any way*, under a government that is free in the sense that we would have it ; and all this without any abridgement of the rights of citizens, without any civil disabilities. At most we know of only one case, to which an exception can be made on the ground of religious opinion. This is, where a man denies the existence of a God, or of a state of future rewards and punishments. In such a case, we do not see how the obligation of an oath can have any binding force at all ; and therefore we cannot see the propriety of administering one, either as a witness or as a magistrate. We cannot help looking on it as a mere mockery of this solemnity, to administer an oath in such cases.

We are aware how much has been said, and may be said, in favor of the State having some established form of religion, and some particular religious test of office. But we are fully persuaded, that the evils which result from such an arrangement very much outweigh all the good that can be derived from it. Religion, all true religion, is a *voluntary* offering on the part of man to his Creator. A forced creed is no creed. Belief, from its own nature and the very constitution of the human mind, must be free, spontaneous, induced by argument, not compelled by fear or by threats. All professed belief of this latter kind, is utterly unworthy of the name. It is an object of abhorrence to God, and of loathing to men. And whether an attempt is made to force

it on our minds, by the terrors of an Inquisitorial tribunal, or by the milder penalties of additional taxation and loss of civil rights, it matters not with us. We will not say that both of these ways of enforcing it ought to receive equal disapprobation from us; but we do truly say, that both receive our unqualified disapprobation.

We are the more confirmed in our views of religious liberty as already explained, because we see very plainly, that the religious opinions which the civil power may sanction to-day, it may to-morrow proscribe. It has often done so. But believing as we do, that religion is a matter of immeasurably greater interest than every thing which pertains to the present world, we should be among the last men on earth to commit the disposal of our faith to the civil magistrate, who might on one day exalt the Christian religion, and on another trample the cross beneath his feet. We set too high a value on this precious gift of heaven, ever voluntarily to commit the keeping of it to hands which may thus desecrate and abuse it.

I have only a word to add here, in order to prevent being misunderstood, respecting a *special* obligation which one may *voluntarily* contract, to a religious society who cherish a particular belief.

If we enter such a society, professing the same belief with them, and understand it as a condition of membership or good standing among them that we continue to cherish the same belief, then, in case we do change it, it is plainly lawful and proper that the society should withdraw from its connection with us as a member. But all this is a thing merely of *voluntary* obligation. And in *no case whatever*, do we believe that civil disabilities or penalties should be connected with any excommunication by a Christian church.

2. We not only believe that all men should be left free to form their religious opinions, without any civil penalties or disabilities, but we maintain most fully, that *when the religious sentiments of any one are formed, he has a right to*

propagate them, to defend them, and to support them, by his efforts, his pen, his property, or his influence.

In all this we understand of course, that in so doing he does not slander or abuse his neighbor, nor deny him any civil or social right as a member of the community, nor hinder him in the lawful exercise of it. Of the former of these faults the civil law justly may take cognizance. Against the latter, the law of love and of doing as we would be done by, protests.

We believe most fully, that men have a right to propagate their religious sentiments, if they confine themselves to argument and persuasion, and do not appeal to abuse, which is a crime in the eye of the civil law, it being manifestly against the peace of the community. We are well aware, indeed, of the mischiefs which may result from a free right to propagate religious, or rather *irreligious* sentiments of any kind. We know too well, what incalculable evil the publication of such books as the *Age of Reason*, the works of Boulanger, of Voltaire, and of La Mettrie have occasioned. We shudder at it as one of the most dreadful of evils, inasmuch as it takes hold on *eternity* and not merely on time. But dreadful as it is, we regard as a still greater evil, the power of civil government, or of any ecclesiastical tribunal, to suppress the publication of books at its option. To-day it may choose, as Frederic the Great did, and the French Directory after him, to circulate widely Voltaire, and D'Alembert, and Rousseau; or to-morrow it may spread wide the poison of some heresy lurking under a Christian name; while, at the same time, it inhibits all antidotes to these tremendous evils. The liberty of the press, *the unreserved liberty of it*, is in our view fundamental to religious liberty. If the press be, as it doubtless sometimes is, a most terrible instrument of doing evil; it is also one of the most efficient of all instruments in doing good. We would forever leave it open and free to do good; and if the liberty to do evil must come along with this, (and we do not see how it is

possible to prevent it), why then the friends of truth must trust to argument, to reason, to conscience, and to God, for triumph over the powers of darkness. And this they may do, without peril to the cause in which they are engaged.

If I have not liberty to propagate my religious sentiments, provided I do it by reason, and argument, and persuasion, and with decorum, then I am not free. Liberty in its highest and most precious sense is denied me. As an immortal being, I look forward to the time when myself and all around me are to enter on the "recompense of reward," a final and eternal one. If I am serious in my religious views; if I am well persuaded that they are true, and this after repeated and protracted and patient examination; then I must be utterly destitute even of the spirit of common humanity, if I do not desire others to participate with me in this persuasion. Were it a matter pertaining merely to their *temporal* interests, most of my fellow beings would pronounce me destitute of humanity in case I should not warn those around me whom I thought to be in danger, and should not excite them to escape from it. But O the never-dying soul! The awful tribunal of "eternal judgment!" "The fearfulness of falling into the hands of the living God, who is a consuming fire!" If I believe that there are unequivocal declarations in God's word, (as I truly do), in respect to these tremendous subjects; if I believe that the impenitent are surely exposed to endless misery; that those who reject the Saviour as he is offered in the gospel, "shall not see life, but that the wrath of God will *abide* on them;" can I as a man of any pretensions to benevolence, refrain from telling all this to others, from urging it upon them, and from warning them of the danger in which I sincerely believe them to be? Truly, the opponents of our religious views must halt here, and candidly avow, that if such are our real convictions, we ought in all good conscience to urge them upon our neighbors.

Say, if you please, that we are utterly mistaken; that all our convictions are the result of superstition, or prejudice, or bigotry, or of a narrow illiberal education; yet so long as we are in this plight, what are we to do? As honest men, we must follow the dictates of our consciences. We acknowledge the possibility that these may be blinded, or perverted, or even "seared;" but so long as we are not convinced that this is the case, how can we do otherwise than propagate our sentiments by all proper methods and with all the earnestness in our power? The liberty of doing this, we value as much more than we do mere *civil* liberty, as the interests of eternity exceed in value those of time.

If then it is essential to a full enjoyment of religious liberty, that *men should have the right of propagating their religious sentiments*, whatever they may be; and that they should be restrained by the laws of the land, only so far as the laws guard the reputation of individuals who may be assailed and protect them from injury as to their property or rights; it will of course follow, that *men should have the right of defending their sentiments when they are assailed, and of showing, if they can do so, that the sentiments of those who assail them are erroneous and hurtful.*

Here, my dear Sir, is a part of religious liberty, on which it does seem to me that yourself, and some others who have the like zeal with you against the Orthodox, have not sufficiently reflected, or that you are unwilling to concede it. We believe, on the part of the Orthodox, that the sentiments of those distinguished men who fled from persecution in the old world, in order that they might worship God in the new one, and in such a way as best agreed with the dictates of their consciences,—that these sentiments do essentially agree with the revelation which God has made in the holy Scriptures. We believe this *ex animo*, from persuasion, because we have searched the Scriptures and think that we find these sentiments there; not because Calvin, and the Reformers, and the Pilgrims believed them. The possibility

of this, you I trust are prepared to admit. If there are bigots among us, as you so often assert, at least, I may venture to suggest, we are not all bigots. Such of us then as believe from investigating the Bible, that the sentiments of the Reformation are found there, hold fast to the position that we ought to have the liberty of defending these sentiments when they are assailed, and of exposing, if we can, the errors of those who assail them.

But here, it would seem, is the very essence of our crime. In your view, it appears to be altogether commendable, that Unitarians should deluge the community with Improved Versions, with the works of Fellowes, and Belsham, and Priestley, and Cappe, and others of the like character; that they should form themselves into Tract Societies and distribute hundreds of thousands of Unitarian tracts, assailing the sentiments of the Orthodox openly, or secretly undermining the principles which they regard as of vital importance; that they should form Missionary Societies and endeavor not only to spread their principles among the Hindoos and coöperate with Rammohun Roy, but to traverse the regions of the West and South in our own land, and forestall the efforts of the Orthodox there; that they should hold public meetings, in which not only the clergy, but legislators, civilians, and judges from the highest seat of justice, come forward and excite the multitude against Orthodoxy; that they should issue periodicals monthly, weekly, and almost daily, in which the public are warned against the *Inquisition* that is forming among them, and the desperate set of bigots who are forging chains for their religious liberty; that they should declaim against these men and their principles, (their alleged or supposed principles), from one Sabbath to another, (in which you above all others, unless you are very erroneously represented, have taken the lead); all this, and much more of the same nature, is not only lawful in your eyes, but altogether commendable. In public and in private, from the pulpit and the press, you

have not ceased to urge on, with all your eloquence, measures of this and the like nature.

But turn now the tablet, and look at the other side of the picture. When the Orthodox publish their books, tracts, and periodicals, they are represented as bigots and as raving mad. They have neither modesty nor humility. When they associate for the purposes of friendly conference and counsel, and in order to strengthen each other's hands, and to encourage each other to walk in the way of their forefathers, they are plotting in order to enclose the community in the toils of the Inquisition; they are forming "ECCLESIASTICAL COURTS," before which all liberal-minded men, that choose to think and investigate for themselves, are sooner or later to be brought, and to be made to know that there is *only one* way of thinking which is to be tolerated. And since such high crimes and misdemeanors as these have been laid to their charge, the public are told, that "the times have required *a voice of STRENGTH and COURAGE to be lifted up; and you rejoice that you are found among those by whom it has been uttered and sent far and wide.*" (Preface, p. vii.) Not a movement can they make, but they are suspected of forging manacles for the Liberalists, or at least of looking up the iron to make them with. The forges, to be sure, are under ground and out of sight, like the shops of the fabled Cyclops; but you know, as the neighbors of these famous blacksmiths of old did, that *operations* are going on, for you hear the strokes.

On the claim for yourself of "a voice of strength and courage," and of "uttering and sending it *far and wide,*" it does not become me to make any remarks. The thing I shall leave to speak for itself. But in respect to the assumption, (in the whole paragraph connected with this declaration, and in a multitude of other places in your publications), that all which is done by the Orthodox to oppose the views and designs of Liberalists is bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and unlawful conspiracy against religious liberty, and design

to bring in again the dark ages of superstition and terror—all this *assumption*, in a land of religious liberty, where every man has the same right to defend and propagate his own sentiments as his neighbor has to propagate opposite ones; all this too, in the STATE of MASSACHUSETTS, the very HOME of the PILGRIMS—it requires some meekness to hear without emotion, and to bear with becoming patience.

What reason now, my dear Sir, can you assign, why the Orthodox have not as good a right to their Associations and Societies, their tracts, their pamphlets, their periodicals, yea, their octavos; their zeal also, and their union, their strenuousness even—in order to maintain their own sentiments, as you and those who are with you have to all these in behalf of Unitarianism? It is a fair question, and I do insist on a sober answer to it. Will you say, that men have no right to be in earnest, in defending *bigotry*? I know you do say this; that is, you say what manifestly implies this. But then I am not to be diverted from my argument by such an answer. Who, I ask, has made the decision that Orthodoxy is *bigotry*? “Dr. Channing and his friends affirm it.” Granted; but in a land of *liberty*, there is a freedom of thought to be allowed; and by far the greater portion of our community have made up their minds, that there is no *bigotry* in the sentiments in question. But you, Sir, take for granted the very question in dispute; and taking this for granted, you decide just as though there was no appeal from your tribunal, and consign us over to the ranks of dark designing conspirators against the religious liberties of our country. It is too late to deny this, or to tread back as to these charges, unless indeed you recall them. They have gone forth “far and wide,” and with “a voice of strength;” and I appeal to every honest and ingenuous man on earth, be he Unitarian or Trinitarian, whether they do not fairly imply all that I have understood them to imply.

Sir, I repeat it once more, the Orthodox do not understand why they have not the liberty of defending the opinions which their ancestors held, in case they do sincerely accord with them. That they do sincerely agree, they openly profess and avow; and neither yourself, nor any man on earth, has a right to call this in question. Why then do you reproach us, that we are in earnest to defend and to propagate our belief? We do from the heart believe, that the eternal salvation of our fellow beings is connected with a hearty assent to the fundamental principles which we avow. Should we not then be entirely destitute even of common humanity; should we not be treacherous to the cause which we profess to believe is infinitely important; should we not in fact be gross hypocrites—if we did not manifest our earnestness in maintaining and propagating our religious sentiments?

But you will concede the *theory* of this principle. You will say, however, that the *manner* of our defending and propagating our sentiments is what you condemn, and that this is the principal subject of your severe animadversions.

To this I reply, first, that such is not the case in point of fact. You have represented us as having dark, selfish, malignant purposes, as determined at all adventures to introduce compulsion into matters of religion, a compulsion 'worse than the terrors of the Inquisition and the chains which it forges.' This surely is the blackest crime of all, if it be truly ours; and this as surely has nothing to do with the *manner* in which we defend and propagate our sentiments.

Next, as to the *manner* itself, I have but few remarks to make. I am ready to concede, on my part, that I have seen and read things among the Orthodox, the manner of which I in some respects heartily disapproved. I have never thought, that to rail at our opponents was either Christian or courteous. Above all, every reflecting man must say, Nothing can be more improbable, than that this kind of proceeding will be likely to convince those who differ from us. Who will hear us with patience, when we begin our reproof by

letting him know that we think him either a fool or a knave?

I am not blinded to this by party zeal. I have seen some of it among those whom I warmly love and greatly respect. Perhaps I may have shown some of this same disposition in my own writings. If so, produce it, and I will tread that part under my feet, and make my atonement by unfeigned sorrow to an injured public, and to the injured cause of Christ. But if I have indulged in such a mode of writing, I am unconscious of it to myself. I disapprove it; I even abhor it; and yet I know that I am not proof against temptation, and that I am exposed to all the weaknesses and faults of those around me.

But while I thus answer to one part of your complaint by confession, I must be permitted to say, that so far as I have been able to form a judgment from reading the periodicals and pamphlets of both parties, I do think that there is a wide difference between the faults of the Orthodox in this respect and those of Unitarians. I know of nothing in any recent Orthodox publications, which can well compare with the reiterated charges against us by Unitarians, from the pulpit and the press, of bigotry, of gloomy superstition, of dark and fraudulent designs on the religious liberties of our country, of worshipping a God who is a tyrant, of propagating horrible and blasphemous ideas of the Divinity, of worshipping a God who is no better than the devil, of an intention to renew the horrors of the Inquisition, of being gloomy, unsocial, illiterate misanthropes, enthusiasts, hypocrites, deceivers, and other things of the like nature. It were easy to substantiate this charge by abundance of evidence; and this too from publications which you yourself patronize by your pen, your purse, and your approbation.

But I forbear. The subject is distressing—it is even odious. There are men, I know, among your own denomination, who see all this and look upon it just as I do. You are very far from being agreed among yourselves in respect

to such measures, as you must know ; at least if you do not know it, your friends must have been uncommonly reserved in their communications. There are men among you, and not a few, of high and ingenuous feelings, who take the liberty to believe that the Orthodox have the same right to "urge hard" as the Unitarians have, and who look with disgust on all the accusations of such a nature as those to which I have adverted.

Notwithstanding all that has been done, however, in the way of making such accusations against us, I do not appear as an apologist for any severity, or for the calling of hard names, or for ill natured accusations, on the part of myself or of my brethren. If we are guilty in this respect, we stand condemned. But it is to be expected, that when men are charged with a great crime because they choose to walk, and insist on walking, in the old paths of the Reformers, and when they are assailed in an angry and bitter and scornful manner for so doing, that some of them may be betrayed to go beyond the boundaries, which Christian meekness and forbearance and even self-respect allow. I say this is not strange ; although I do not deny that it is wrong. But if it be wrong, you, my dear Sir, are one of the last men who have a title to reproach us with this wrong, as I shall have occasion to show still further in the sequel, before this letter is closed.

Enough for the present, on the *religious liberty* which we avow and advocate, the liberty to defend our own sentiments and to propagate them. No government can properly interfere with this right. Nor can any party justly deny us such a liberty as I have endeavored to defend. I know of no power on earth, which has the right to say to our opponents, "You shall have unbounded liberty of speaking, and writing, and acting, in order to defend and propagate your sentiments ; but the Orthodox cannot justly claim the same liberty for themselves."

That men should differ in opinion, is incident to the frailty of human nature, and to the imperfection of human

knowledge. But still we hold sacred the right to maintain our honest convictions, not by word and writing only, but by the use of our property and influence as well as our tongues and pens. Our Bill of Rights in this State assures us of this privilege. We have a right to endow seminaries in order to furnish teachers of our own sentiments ; we have a right to demand protection in this ; the very same rights in both respects as Unitarians have. We have a right to give our property to *churches* of our own way of thinking, and to believe and maintain that *parishes* are not of course churches. We have a right to feel ourselves injured when this property is wrested from us under color of the law. We have rights in a University which is the property of the *whole* State, and was not founded or exclusively endowed by Unitarians ; at least we have such rights, so long as we are not absolutely disfranchised. We have a right to expect that the property of the State in such an establishment, should not be appropriated to the purposes of a party ; and that the instructors in them should not give their services to one sect only, which has in *fact*, although not in name, excluded all others from any participation with them in these privileges. We who have children to educate, in common with our fellow citizens, feel the loss of such rights. We cannot help deeply feeling them ; for we are obliged to send our children abroad, at a great expense, in order to avoid their becoming partizans in the present warfare against our own sentiments. We do not complain that our sentiments are opposed ; but we complain that they are opposed in this way, and at the sacrifice of rights that we hold dear and deem sacred. We do not complain that Unitarians build up seminaries for themselves, in order to educate young men to spread abroad and defend their own sentiments ; they have an entire right to build up schools, colleges, or theological seminaries of this kind, and to confine their privileges to their own body. The Bill of Rights assures them of this privilege. But they should remember, that it assures us of the same. What we

complain of is, that an Institution which belongs in common to the whole State, which was founded and endowed to a large extent by Orthodox men, and consecrated to maintaining their faith, should now be made exclusively a party seminary, so that from the President down to the janitor, no man of *known* Orthodox sentiments, can find access there as an instructor. We complain that rights public and common, should be seized by one exclusive party, and appropriated to their own purposes; that teachers, maintained at the expense of the Commonwealth, should be devoted to a seminary exclusively Unitarian, and paid from a fund in which the Orthodox have a common interest. Of all this we complain; but never shall or can complain, that Unitarians manage their *own* Seminaries entirely in their own way; provided always, that they concede to us the same liberty.

Look now for a moment on this whole case, and put yourself in our place. Would you not feel, could you help feeling, that you had to deal with those, who being in possession of power forget right? And yet, Sir, you are not only looking on, but heartily approving of all this, and have yourself been an efficient agent in bringing it about. How can it be that there is only one side to such a question?

We are severely reproached, because we separate in our religious communion and worship from Unitarians. Some of your strongest expressions of disapprobation and indignation are poured out against us for this. And yet, when I examine this matter to the bottom, I am unable to see the justice of this reproof. We do sincerely believe, that certain sentiments are *essential* to the Christian religion. We regard them as being so essential, that true Christianity cannot exist without them. Whether we are in the right or the wrong as to this, it is not my present purpose to inquire. Enough that we sincerely believe ourselves to be in the right. If so, then how can others deny us the liberty of thinking and acting in a manner that accords with this? If we should not do so, it would be proof that we were neither

sincere nor in earnest, in our religious sentiments ; in other words, that we were hypocrites. You may believe this of us ; and judging by the general tenor of your writings, I know not how to avoid the conclusion that you do think so. But we still aver, that you have no right to affirm this ; and we must maintain this position, so long as our consciences acquit us in respect to the matter of this accusation.

In separating from those who differ from us in religious opinion, (as we believe, fundamentally), we are not led on by motives of bigotry or of an exclusive spirit. We are prone to ask a question which is not recent ; " How can two walk together, unless they are agreed ? " We do not urge these words beyond what we think to be their plain and obvious import. We do not think that small differences of opinion about *non-essentials*, are intended to be included in them. We limit the meaning to agreement in things, which in our view are *essential*. Such we do honestly believe to be the difference between Unitarians and ourselves. And such, not a few of the Unitarians themselves have avowed it to be. Mr. Belsham declares that " we do not worship the same God ; " and some of your writers and speakers declare, that the God whom we worship is a *devil*. How can you complain, then, that we separate from you ? Surely you do not wish to be united in the bonds of communion with such worshippers. If you have any conscience on this subject, it must remonstrate against it.

But who among the Orthodox ever complains that Unitarians separate from them ? I trust none. An inconsistency with the principles that we profess, would lie on the very face of such a complaint.

We do not proscribe men from whom we separate in our worship, either in a civil or social respect. We vote for them as our magistrates and legislators. We help to elevate them to the highest offices in the State ; we do so, because there are among our religious opponents men whose civil and social worth we acknowledge, and pay it the cheerful tribute

of our regard. We do it also, because the State in which we live is so divided in matters of religious opinion, that we fully believe a religious test for civil honor and office would be altogether inexpedient. We rejoice sincerely in the welfare of those whose religious opinions differ from ours, and cheerfully contribute to do them civil honor. All this cannot be denied of us with truth. And when we separate from them in our worship, it is with pain, with deep regret, with ardent wishes that they might cherish the like religious sentiments with ourselves ; but with a consciousness too, that our duty to the principles which we profess, obliges us to follow the course that we pursue.

Such are our views, feelings, and motives, in regard to the painful subjects of dispute now agitated in this community. Such I am sure are my own ; and such, I have satisfactory evidence, are the views of my beloved brethren with whom I have the pleasure to be associated in action and in belief.

I have thus given a brief view, in regard to our opinions about religious liberty and the rights of conscience. In differing from many around us, and in separating from their religious communion, we well know, we do fully recognize the fact, that we are responsible to the great HEAD of the Church. But we as fully believe, that we are responsible ONLY to *Him*. We do not mean to deny others the right of remonstrating, and of endeavoring to show us that our course is wrong ; but it is also true, that we do not believe they have any right to *demand* that we should abandon it ; nor do we think that to call us bigots, and hypocrites, and plotters against the religious liberties of the State, is the most Christian way of reclaiming us.

And now in view of these principles and of these facts in reference to Orthodox Christians, I would ask, Where is the ground of the accusations which are made against them as conspiring against the dearest liberties of the Commonwealth ? I have often been struck, my dear Sir, in reading

your writings as well as those of others, with the *manner* in which you prefer charges of the most heinous nature against us. On your own side, all that your party have done is liberal, and just, and noble, and worthy of the exalted age in which the "march of mind" has become so conspicuous, and which is carrying us on with a rapid stride far away from the Cimmerian regions of Calvin and Luther ; nay, the boldest assertions, the most perilous propositions, if not evidence of a well directed and skilful aim at the enemy, seem to be evidence in your view of great valor and of high devotedness to the cause of the New Reformation. On the other hand, all efforts of the like nature among us, in defence of our own sentiments, or in the way of assailing what we think to be errors—all these from beginning to end, appear to be reputed as mere evidences of narrow mindedness, of gloomy bigotry, of furious zeal, of a persecuting spirit, and of dark designs to renew the manacles and the dungeons to which the disciples of Ignatius Loyola have so long made their appeal.

Sir, I do not understand this. By whom has the great question been prejudged and settled, whether all that is just and true is so plainly on the side of Unitarianism, that it does not so much as admit of a single doubt, or rather, that it is to be assumed as a matter of course ? Or is this assumption even founded on one of the great *a priori* principles of our moral nature, which it needs no reasoning to settle, and which no arguments can make plainer or stronger than it is from the very first moment that it is presented to the mind ? So one who reads your writings, would be strongly tempted to suppose you deem it to be. What you say and write on subjects connected with religious dispute, bears this impress on its very face. If not, then I can solve the appearances in your writings, only by a supposition more disagreeable still, and to which I shall never resort without being absolutely driven to do it ; I mean the supposition, that you have, by the flattery of your friends, and in conse-

quence of dictating to your party so long, at last come to the position of mind, that αἰρεσις ἑφα is enough ; that you expect as a matter of course, that all which you utter will be readily assented to, and that none but bigots will venture to call it in question. I will not, however, believe this either of you or your friends, without better evidence than any that yet lies before the public. I could easily believe that some of the journal and newspaper writers, who employ so many paragraphs in fulsome and bloated eulogies of your works, might belong to the class supposed above. But as I have no apprehension that you have any concert with them, or even thank them for the *lacker* which they strive to put on you, I have not a word more to say concerning them. What there is in your writings that deserves praise, (and this is much, and some of it of a very high order too), they seem to me to be so unfortunate as not to see ; and what is of a different or doubtful character, they are pretty sure to laud in the most extravagant and disgusting manner.

Having thus explained the views and feelings of myself and my friends, in relation to the religious liberty which we think to be proper, and which we shall ever strenuously advocate, and thus prepared the way to decide more fully how little your apprehensions respecting our principles and designs are capable of being justified and defended ; I now proceed *more fully* to develope, (as I intimated near the commencement of this letter it was my intention to do), *the tenor and spirit* of your accusations against us.

In order to present a combined and condensed view of these, I must beg the liberty of repeating here, not the words in all cases, but the substance and spirit of the passages which the beginning of this letter presents. These, united with other extracts from your writings which I intend to make, will enable every intelligent reader to judge for himself, whether the complaints which I have brought forward, and which I have still to prefer, are not sufficiently well grounded.

I make no hesitation in repeating the expression of my entire undoubting conviction, that the Orthodox are the men whom you mean to characterize in these and the like passages ; and all proof of this, to any intelligent reader, I must think to be utterly unnecessary.

In the first extract just named, you intimate that ' the religion of the Orthodox has been turned into spiritual tyranny, that it has fastened superstitions on the conscience, subdued the ignorant and susceptible with spiritual terrors, spread far and wide dark appalling views of God, struck a dread of inquiry into superior understandings, and made servility of spirit to pass for piety. The intimidations [of the Orthodox] from the pulpit and the press have rendered some too timid to think, made them anxiously stifle every doubt or misgiving in regard to their opinions, to shrink from the seekers after truth as from infection, to surrender their best powers to others and unresistingly to receive a teaching which wars against conscience and reason. [Orthodoxy] makes chains that eat more deeply into the soul than those of iron. This espionage of bigotry as effectually closes our lips and our hearts as an armed and hundred-eyed police. This opinion is combined and organized in sects, and swayed by the clergy. A sect skilfully organized, trained to utter one cry, combined to cover with reproach whoever may differ from themselves, to drown the free expression of opinion by denunciations of heresy, and to strike terror into the multitude by joint and perpetual menace—such a sect is as perilous and palsying to the intellect, as the Inquisition. It serves the minister as effectually as the sword. *The present age is notoriously sectarian, and therefore hostile to liberty.*' Elect. Serm. pp. 25—28.

Of course, then, the *present age* is one in which such a sect lives, (i. e. in your estimation) ; and lives, not in Europe or Asia, where it would very little concern us, but here at home, in Old Massachusetts, the land of the blessed Pilgrims ; and this sect is neither more nor less than the *Orthodox*. It

would be strange indeed to deny that you meant to affirm this, merely because you have not here called them by name. I will not for a moment suppose you to be capable of such disingenuousness.

In the second extract above named, you suggest that 'the accusation of a persecuting spirit, will be repelled on the part of the Orthodox with indignation. But you insist upon it that it is true. Fire and sword, you allege, are not the only instruments of persecution. The form may be changed, while the spirit lives.' "Persecution has indeed given up its halter and fagot; but *it breathes venom from its lips, and secretly blasts what it cannot openly destroy.*" Works. pp. 561, 562.

A terrible Hydra indeed this must be, which has such a poisonous breath! And happy must it be for Massachusetts, that she can furnish "a voice of strength" to reach "far and wide" enough to frighten it back to its native fen, whenever it makes its appearance and begins to hiss!

In the third long extract as mentioned above, the *Inquisition* is again brought upon the tapis. 'The multitude [of the Orthodox] dare not think or speak, because [the Inquisition in the *new* form] is more terrible than that of Spain. Men are told indeed to search the Scriptures; but they know full well, that unless they find there the creed of the Orthodox, they must undergo the penalty of exclusion. All this is worse than Papal bondage. And on the ground of Congregationalism, the church can be little more than the tool of the minister in the business of exclusion. So all comes into the hands of the clergy; who, in order to complete the whole plan, are forming Consociations, and erecting ECCLESIASTICAL courts, which are to compel men to believe as they do. This is a most degrading form of vassalage, imposing on the mind the dreams and fictions of men, for the everlasting truth of God.' Works. pp. 565, 566.

The fourth extract presents an apology for your controversial efforts. This in substance is, that 'you saw assaults on

freedom of thought and speech [by the Orthodox], which would have left us only the name of religious liberty. It became perilous to search the Scriptures for ourselves, and to speak our own convictions. The often reiterated idea of penalties as bad as fine and imprisonment is again introduced, [a spectre which seems to have haunted you with more than ordinary obtrusiveness and pertinacity]; and then to frighten this spectre away, your strong voice was raised, and it made its retreat.' Works. Pref. pp. vii. viii.

Here I might rest my case, having made out proof enough of the ground of complaint which I have alleged, in respect to the treatment that we have received at your hands. But that I may not seem to have fastened on a few paragraphs, and to have dealt unfairly, I proceed still farther to cite from your Works.

On page 215, you speak of Robert Fellowes' work as 'a useful vindication of Christianity from the *gross errors* which Calvinism has labored to identify with this divine system.'

Page 216, you speak of the "five thorny points of Calvinism," and say that "few designs are more praiseworthy, than to free Christianity from the reproach brought upon it by that system."

On the same page you assert, that "Calvinism owes its perpetuity to the influence of fear in palsyng the moral nature;" that it terrifies men so "that they dare not confess, even to themselves, the shrinking, which they feel, from the unworthy views which this system gives of God; and by thus *smothering their just abhorrence*, they gradually extinguish it, and even come to vindicate in God what would disgrace his creatures."

Just before the paragraph now presented, you say of Mr. Fellowes' work, that "it expresses strongly and without circumlocution, *the abhorrence with which EVERY mind, uncorrupted by false theology*, must look on Calvinism."

Yet those who abandon Calvinism, with all these awful severities and horrible absurdities, and prefer to adopt the

system in a somewhat modified or milder form, you represent, a few pages onward (p. 220), as *cowards* and *degenerate*. At least you say, that "if the stern reformer of Geneva could lift up his head" and hear their mitigated tone, he would call them so, and he would tell them that "*moderate Calvinism is a solecism, a contradiction in terms*;" by all which I understand you plainly to mean, that such as profess to be *moderate Calvinists*, are justly liable to the imputation of *cowardice*.

On page 221, after speaking of the Westminster Assembly's Catechism and Confession, you say, "A man of plain sense, whose spirit has not been broken to this creed by education or terror, will think that it is not necessary for us to travel to heathen countries, to learn how mournfully the human mind may misrepresent the Deity." In other words, the religious creeds of the heathen can afford no more striking misrepresentations of the Deity, than the Assembly's Catechism and Confession.

On page 402, you represent Trinitarians as 'having no right to object to the picture and symbol worship of the Roman Catholics. If Christ is God, and has a body, that body may as well be pictured as any other one; and there can be no rational objection to making use of this picture in our worship.'

On page 405, you aver that "Trinitarianism is a riddle;" that "instead of teaching an intelligible God, it offers to the mind a strange compound of *hostile attributes, bearing plain marks of those ages of darkness, when Christianity shed but a faint ray, and the diseased fancy teemed with prodigies and unnatural creations.*"

On page 409 you say; "We look with *horror* and grief on the views of God's government, which are naturally and intimately united with Trinitarianism. They take from us our Father in heaven, and substitute a *stern* and *unjust* lord."

On page 415, you admit that there are some great minds among the adherents of the prevalent system [of Orthodoxy]; "but," you add, "they seem to move in chains, and to fulfil

poorly their high function of adding to the wealth of the human intellect ;” and you then liken them to Samson grinding in the mill of the Philistines.

On page 423, you say that if you believed what Trinitarians teach in regard to sin, you should “feel yourself living under a legislation unspeakably dreadful, under laws written, like Draco’s, in blood ; and instead of thanking the sovereign for providing an infinite substitute, you should shudder at the attributes which render this expedient necessary.”

On page 428 you say ; “According to these principles [viz. those of Trinitarianism], the fanatic who exclaimed, *I believe, because it is impossible*, has a fair title to canonization.” “Trinitarianism links itself with several *degrading* errors ; and its most natural alliance is with Calvinism, that cruel faith, which, stripping God of mercy and man of power, has made Christianity an instrument of torture to the timid, and an object of doubt or scorn to hardier spirits. I repeat it, a doctrine, which violates reason like the Trinity,” etc.

On page 557 you say ; “Nothing is plainer, than that the leaders of the party called ‘Orthodox,’ have adopted and mean to enforce a *system of exclusion*, in regard to Liberal Christians.”

On page 558, the Orthodox are represented as having fallen into some of “the grossest errors.”

On page 561, the Orthodox are represented as menacing with ruin the Christian who listens to Unitarians, and as branding him with the most terrifying epithets in order to prevent a candid inquiry into the truth.

On page 568 you assert, that “it is a *melancholy fact*, that our long established form of Congregational church government is menaced, and TRIBUNALS *unknown to our churches,—are to be introduced for the very purpose, that the supposed errors and mistakes of ministers and private Christians may be tried and punished as heresies ; that is, AS CRIMES.*”

But where shall I end in making extracts of such a nature, when all of these have been taken from three short pieces in

your book ; and in these I have omitted as much as I have extracted that is of the like nature? I conclude the whole task of extracting, by presenting one specimen more of the manner in which you treat that doctrine which of all that is *peculiar* to the gospel, the Orthodox deem the most dear and sacred ; I mean the doctrine of Atonement by the suffering and death of Christ upon the cross. It is thus that you speak of this part of our faith.

“ This doctrine of an Infinite substitute, suffering the penalty of sin, to manifest God’s wrath against sin, and thus to support his government, is, I fear, so familiar to us all, that its severe character is overlooked. Let me then set it before you, in new terms, and by a new illustration ; and if in so doing, I may wound the feelings of some who hear me, I beg them to believe, that I do it with pain, and from no impulse but a desire to serve the cause of truth.—Suppose, then, that a teacher should come among you, and should tell you, that the Creator, in order to pardon his own children, had erected a gallows in the centre of the universe, and had publicly executed upon it, in room of the offenders, an Infinite being, the partaker of his own Supreme Divinity ; suppose him to declare, that this execution was appointed, as a most conspicuous and terrible manifestation of God’s justice, and of the infinite wo denounced by his law ; and suppose him to add, that all beings in heaven and earth are required to fix their eyes on this fearful sight, as the most powerful enforcement of obedience and virtue. Would you not tell him, that he calumniated his Maker? Would you not say to him, that this central gallows threw gloom over the universe ; that the spirit of a government, whose very acts of pardon were written in such blood, was terror, not paternal love ; and that the obedience, which needed to be upheld by this horrid spectacle, was nothing worth? Would you not say to him, that even you, in this infancy and imperfection of your being, were capable of being wrought upon by nobler motives, and of hating sin through more generous views ; and that much more the angels, those pure flames of love, need not the gallows and an executed God, to confirm their loyalty? You would all so feel at such teaching as I have supposed ; and yet how does this differ from the popular doctrine of atonement?” pp. 423, 424.

On this last extract I deem all comment superfluous. The holy apostle who asserts that *Christ has redeemed the church by his blood* ; who was “ *determined not to preach any thing else save Jesus Christ and him CRUCIFIED* ;” who “ *gloried in nothing save in the cross of Christ* ;” and the redeemed in heaven who ascribe *salvation to his BLOOD*, may stand as arbiters to decide on such an awful paragraph.

And now, my dear Sir, I come to the main object of this letter. I have endeavored to prepare the way, and come at last to the principal thing in view ; with great reluctance, indeed, but still with deep conviction that duty bids me do it. I have complained that you have uttered frequent and severe accusations against us, who belong to the denomination of the Orthodox. I have shown the ground of my complaint. Permit me then to add to what I have said, by making what I deem a reasonable and proper and Christian request of you.

You have given your name to the world as the author of accusations, that *we are aiming to subvert and destroy the religious liberty of this Commonwealth ; that we are combined to put down all free inquiry in matters of religion ; that we are endeavoring, in secret and openly, to introduce an ecclesiastical tyranny worse than that of the Inquisition ; that we are determined to raise up ecclesiastical Courts to try, condemn, and punish all whom we deem to be heretics ; and thus to prevent all right of private judgment, and all freedom in respect to religious opinion.*

I have openly avowed in this letter my own opinion, and what I know to be the opinion of the Christian brethren with whom I have the honor to be associated, in relation to these subjects. I know that what I have said is incapable of being contradicted, on any grounds of evidence. *I do know that the accusations which you stand pledged to support are NOT TRUE. I aver that THEY ARE NOT*, before heaven and earth. That they are accusations of a hurtful tendency, need not be said. They go to destroy all respect for us, all confidence in us, all prospects of our usefulness in society or in the church, just so far as you are believed ; and to render us the objects of suspicion, of scorn, and of hatred. As injured men, as injured in a manner that is highly unjust and cruel, we call on you either for reparation, or else to support your charges. These charges are *allegations as to matters of FACT*. They are not matters of opinion merely, or the deductions which may be drawn from opinions.

As matters of fact, you are bound to support them. According to all demands of propriety and justice, you have no liberty now to retreat, by professing disdain of your opponents ; none to screen yourself under the allegation, (as you have attempted in the preface to your Works to do), that you dislike controversy. On every ground of equity, you must either support the charges which you have made, *as to facts* ; or take them back ; or else stand before the public as one who has abused and maltreated his fellow beings, members of the same Commonwealth, entitled to the same privileges with himself, and having a right to claims that they shall be spoken of with *truth* and *justice* ; a right which cannot be violated without responsibility for so doing.

Sir, we have borne these charges in silence long enough—so long that not a few of your friends begin to aver, that silence gives consent to the truth of them. You have repeated them so often and for such a series of years, without being called in question in some important respects for so doing, that you seem of late to have considered the right of doing it as a matter quite beyond the reach of debate. You do not seem to expect, that the objects of your vehement and scornful denunciation, would venture to resist or even to complain. Like those subdued by the irresistible power of the great Assyrian King, “not a bird would move the wing, or open the mouth, or peep.” But if you have believed this respecting us, you have erred, at least in one point, with regard to your views of the Orthodox. We have not been cowering with fear ; we have “held our peace for good.” We acknowledge, indeed, that when “we have meditated on some of these things, the fire has burned within us.” But if we have been trespassers in this respect, kindly put it to the score of human infirmity. After all, however, there are times when it becomes a duty to call on those who assail us with bitter reproaches, who endeavor to hold us up to the scorn and ridicule of the world, who accuse us of crimes which *in foro conscientiæ* would be properly

adjudged to be *high treason against the religious liberties of this Commonwealth*, so long as we profess to be citizens of it, and have sworn to maintain its constitution and its rights. There are boundaries beyond which it is not the duty of the peaceable and the inoffensive to go, in tolerating abuse of this nature without demanding a reparation. We have come to those bounds. We allege before the world that we have been slandered and abused by your writings; we appeal to the particulars; we offer the evidence; and we now appeal to every honest and candid man of any party, to judge whether we have not supported our charge, that you have made and often repeated such accusations against us.

If now you can establish the *facts* which you have alleged, and which go to make up the charges in question, in respect to the Orthodox as a body in this Commonwealth, confession and humiliation in this whole affair undoubtedly will belong to us. If you cannot prove it of the *whole*, then the sweeping accusations which you have made are to be modified, greatly modified. If you can prove it only of a few solitary individuals, called by the name of Orthodox, but who in fact are extravagant and reckless men, this will be little to your purpose, and nothing to ours. We wash our hands of such orthodoxy. Our orthodoxy bids us to be peaceable members of the State, true friends of our government, advocates of religious liberty even at the peril of life and property, and of this too in its highest and most extensive rational sense. We are *Congregationalists*, as we profess to be. We have no prejudices, indeed, against the Presbyterian or other forms of church government, which our brethren of Orthodox denominations in this Commonwealth or in any part of our country see fit to adopt. It is our belief that the gospel has not *prescribed exclusively* any particular form of church government; but that this is left to expediency as times and circumstances may require. Nor are those who may differ from ourselves in respect to the regimen of the churches, therefore to be involved any more than we, in the charges

which you have preferred against the Orthodox. They have no such objects in view, as you charge upon us all; and they would not only disclaim them, but contend most strenuously against them.

But in respect to such of us as profess to be Congregationalists, neither yourself nor any man on earth, has a right to deny that we are sincere in this profession. How then can we have it in view to erect *ecclesiastical judicatories and courts which are to try and punish heretics as criminals*? Why Sir, the suggestion of such a thing among *Congregationalists*, is just as if one were to ask under the present form of our government in this State, 'What day is appointed for the *coronation* of the Governor?' And the fact that you even suggest such a thing, shows, either that you regard us as hypocrites in professing to be Congregationalists; or—shall I say it—that you make assertions of this nature, without even knowing what Congregationalism admits or rejects.

My belief is, that you cannot make your charges good, against any man in this State who bears the name of Orthodox. Still I must be understood as asserting no farther than I have evidence before me. In regard to that class of the Orthodox at which you have aimed your accusations, I fearlessly assert that you cannot possibly make them good. And in this class, I would comprehend laymen as well as clergymen. I have the pleasure of a personal acquaintance somewhat extensive, among the men who are active in promoting the interests of Orthodoxy in Massachusetts. I know that you have wronged them in your charges, and that you are utterly unable to support these charges.

You will ask me, perhaps, why I should select *you* as the object of this call and of this complaint. My answer is ready. You have been ingenuous enough to give your name to the world, as a pledge that you will support the charges which you have made. I commend you most sincerely for this. It is a pledge, that you do not mean to act in the dark, and that you are not afraid to take on you the responsibility of what

you affirm. I regard it also as a satisfactory testimonial, that you believe in the truth of what you have alleged. I would not for a moment have it understood, that in denying the charges which you have brought, I mean to implicate you in the charge of uttering *intentional* falsehood. Sir, I know of nothing in your life or writings, much as I dissent from many things which you have said, that would justify me in making such an assertion. I should deem it inexcusable in myself, not to explain what I say in such a manner, that I shall not be understood by any one, as making an allegation of this nature against you ; nor will I allow the objection to be made to me, that I have assailed you with such a complaint. But this does not make our case any better, but rather the worse. The openness and sincerity with which you proclaim your opinions, are the very means of making them current with such a part of the public as have no personal acquaintance with our views and feelings and motives. If it were known, or even suspected, that you made such charges as a mere party fetch, the mischief of them would at once be prevented. But now, you do the thing with so much openness, and zeal, and sincerity ; and withal hold such a rank in the opinion of the public as to uprightness, and veracity, and candor ; that the allegations which you make that are erroneous, become dangerous and injurious ones. The fact that you are sincere in making them, then, is no reason why we who are exposed to injury by them, should not insist that they must be either made good or retracted. It furnishes the weightier reason why we should do so. And the fact that you have given your name to the world, is a public pledge that you stand ready to support them. You cannot complain then that we make the call on you to do this.

As to the *anonymous* accusations which are a thousand times repeated, from the more stately Review down to the insignificant newspaper and two-penny pamphlet, we have more important concerns in which we ought to be engaged

than in answering them. At all events, I shall never trouble them with any calls of this nature.

One other reason I would assign, why I have made the call on you to support the accusations which you have made against us. It is this, viz. that if we are to give credence to the testimony of your friends, you are the head or leader of the Unitarian party in this State. So the partial friend, who has recently made your defence against the criticisms of the Edinburgh Review, has stated to the world. "Dr. Channing, as our readers are generally aware, *is the acknowledged leader of the Unitarian sect*, as far as there can be leaders, etc." North Amer. Review, July 1830. p. 46. Taking this statement (which has often before been virtually made) to be correct, and knowing that what you say and publish is reëchoed, and republished, and applauded so often and to such a wide extent, we have a right to request, nay to demand from you the reason, why you endeavor so extensively to injure us and to bring us into suspicion, or into contempt and hatred.

What sort of impression you make on your admirers, is sufficiently evident from another passage on the same page of the N. Amer. Review which I have quoted. The writer there says; "Dr. Channing has no doubt *uniformly observed the decorum*, which belongs to his character and feelings, as well as to his position, *and has treated his opponents with PERFECT LIBERALITY.*" p. 46. Who the writer of this Review is, I know not. He is evidently a man of talents and knowledge, and no more prejudiced, I presume, against the Orthodox, than many others, who, like himself, know nothing about them. He receives with implicit belief what you say respecting them. He even commends you for "*perfect liberality*" towards them. As a matter of common justice to his fellow citizens, we have a right now to solicit, that he would peruse the evidence collected in this letter of your "*perfect liberality and decorum*;" then to put himself for a moment in our

condition, and ask, Whether this is the measure of "decorum and liberality" which he would like to have exercised towards himself? The complaints which he makes of the British Reviews, and makes with great justice and force too, as to not a few things, have respect to mere trifles compared with those things of which we feel compelled to make complaint against you.

In the general tenor of his remarks, by way of vindicating your works against the criticisms of the Edinburgh Reviewer, I concur. The flippant impudence, (if I may venture to speak what I feel), the superficial criticism, the illiberal spirit, and the palpable mistakes in literary taste and judgment, which the Scotch Reviewer seems to me to betray, hardly render his work worth the notice bestowed upon it in our own much more able and respectable Review. I have no sympathies with *such* foreign criticism; no blindness, I trust, to the merits and excellencies of your writings in many important respects. I could almost say, "Ubi bene, nemo melius." Indeed, I do fully and heartily say this, of a great many passages in them. I have as much satisfaction in the claims of America to notice, in consequence of your writings, as the Reviewer himself. But then, I have complaints to make which he has either wholly overlooked, or which he is not disposed to acknowledge as well founded. He will pardon me for thus *criticising* on his *criticism*, and believe me when I say of the North American as a whole, *Non invidet, miror magis*. I could even add, on account of some of the pieces in this work, *I nostrum decus*.

But to return; the mischief of which we complain, in consequence of lending your name to sanction accusations against us, does not stop within the narrow circle of Massachusetts. For example; the editor of the *American Quarterly* and *National Gazette*, has every now and then retailed, secretly or openly, accusations against "*the bigots*" of the North, which are copied from you, or echoed in the spirit fostered by reading your works. It comes, however, not with a very

good grace from him. If he is a *true* son of the Romish Church to which he professes to belong, it is indeed "passing strange" that he should rail at the bigotry of us Protestants and Puritans. A man who professes to believe in the infallibility of the Pope, in the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament, in purgatory, in the *plena indulgentia* which is to be purchased for a few pence and which stands advertised on the conspicuous places of the *eternal City*; who of course, if he is sincere in all this, must, on the same authority, believe equally in the relics of the cross, in the transportation by angels of the chapel of my Lady of Loretto, and in the miraculous liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius, with a multitude of other things of the like nature; and who, as a true son of the same church, must bow with cheerful acquiescence in the Bull of the late Pius at Rome, the "Vicar of God and successor of St. Peter," dated Aug. 7, 1814, which after the Jesuits had been suppressed for 40 years by another *infallible* Pontiff, not only restores them to all their rights and privileges, but declares, that "if any one shall infringe, or by an audacious temerity oppose any part of this ordinance [the Bull in question], let him know that he will thereby incur the INDIGNATION of ALMIGHTY GOD, and of the HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL"—I say a man who sincerely believes all this, is not altogether the right man to rail at the bigotry of Orthodox Congregationalists in Massachusetts. And if he be not sincere in his profession of being a genuine and dutiful Son of his mother Church, but professes to be what he is not, then his sneers or his scoffs are matters which, without any very strenuous effort, we can make up our minds to endure.

And now, my dear Sir, can you believe me, when I declare, that in all which I have said above, I have no *personal* aim at you? It is true, that I have called on you *personally*; for how could I possibly avoid this, when my whole letter is concerned with allegations that you have made? But as to exciting a spirit of hostility or bitterness against you as a

man, I disclaim openly any such intention ; it would be unworthy of the cause which I profess to advocate ; it would be unbecoming my place, or the character which I would wish to bear. Is there no separation that can be made by our public, between calling in question allegations and charges, and personal malignity towards those who make them ? I trust there is ; at least, in my own case, I certainly hope there is. I am not behind some of your more sober and judicious friends, in my approbation and admiration of many things in your writings. In all your and my personal intercourse, on the occasion of a discussion some years since, I had no personal reasons to complain of you. I would hope that you can say the same of me. I am sure that I bear you no ill will ; I am certain too, that I am very far from cherishing disrespect for your talents. I say this fully and freely, because I am anxious to be rightly understood. My complaint is, of the injury which your charges are adapted to do us ; of what I believe to be utterly unfounded allegations against our character and designs ; of being held up by you to the public, as conspirators against its sacred liberties. Justice, truth, a proper regard to our good name and usefulness, all demand that the charges against us should be examined, and that they should either be substantiated or retracted.

I could wish the call on you to do this had fallen into better hands than mine. But as the unpleasant task has not to my knowledge been undertaken, I have ventured upon it through a sense of duty. I can only appeal to the good sense, and equity, and candor of the community, for a justification of my course. If these condemn me, then let me stand condemned. If not, then I shall at least have the satisfaction of believing that what I have done may contribute to bring more into the light certain matters, which it has now become high time our community should more fully understand.

Allow me in closing this communication, (already protracted far beyond my original intention), to say a few things in reference to the great contest which is going on between

Unitarianism and Orthodoxy in this part of our country. Your place as the leader of the Unitarian party, (you will pardon me for saying this which I copy from your friends), renders it of some importance, that you should be possessed of just and definite views in regard to some great points of deep conviction and feeling among us. We have no secrets to keep in relation to these matters; and therefore I will frankly state them.

First of all we do sincerely believe in the great Protestant maxim, that **THE SCRIPTURES ARE THE SUFFICIENT AND ONLY RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE.** We do not regard them as a secondary and inferior or mere supplementary edition of the laws of nature. What they reveal, we take as our creed, *our only creed.* We do not reject the use of symbols of faith and catechisms; but we assign no authority or validity to them any farther than as we believe them to be a true representation of God's Word. In heart and soul we agree with the *great doctrines* of the Reformers, of Calvin and Luther. We do so because we believe them to be contained in the Bible, not because we rely at all on any authority of these great men. But we do not hold ourselves bound to defend the same doctrines which they embraced, by the same specific reasons in all cases which they employed in defending them. We have no scruple in rejecting some of their reasons, and of employing better ones when we can find them. Neither do we feel bound to their technology or diction in all cases. Much of this depended on the logic of the day, on the metaphysics of the schools, and on the state of questions controverted between them and the Romanists. The key to many a proposition in their writings, is to be found only by knowing against what errors these propositions were directed; a truth almost entirely overlooked by the greater part of their opponents at the present time; but one which is so obvious, that the overlooking it is well nigh inexcusable. Many an assertion in their writings, which is now brought forward as unjust and "mon-

strous and horrible," melts down into plain and simple truth that every rational Protestant must own, when examined with the caution that I have suggested, and which a common share of candor demands should be exercised.

We are *Calvinists*, if you please to call us so, although we do not court the name. Nor do we refuse it, if it seem good to our opponents to bestow it. But we do not receive *every thing* which Calvin taught; nor any thing because he taught it. We hold ourselves at liberty, and that without being justly subjected to the charge of "disingenuousness and cowardice," to reject some things which seem to us quite unimportant in the system of the Reformers; and to reject their reasons in support of other things which we receive, just so often as we find them, on examination, turn out to be insufficient.

We say the same things in respect to our Pilgrim Fathers. We mean to be their "sons in faith," as we are their sons by descent. But this binds us not to all their modes of reasoning, nor to all their views in respect to matters not essential to the existence and prosperity of true Christianity.

Having adopted these principles, not from tradition, not from catechisms and creeds, not from "the fear of what is worse than the fetters and dungeons of the Inquisition," but from what we believe to be calm and dispassionate inquiry into the Scriptures, from what we know to be long-continued and diligent investigation of them, we have made up our minds to stand fast in the liberty wherewith we believe Christ has made us free, in maintaining the system of doctrine which is denominated *Evangelical* or *Orthodox*. This indeed is very diverse, in not a few important respects, from what you and some of your friends represent it to be. Some years since, my respected friend and colleague, the Rev. Dr. Woods, brought forward against you the allegation of misrepresenting our doctrines, and called on you to make good the charge, or to retract it. Of this call, for reasons best known to yourself, you thought proper to take no notice.

Yet the call must, on all hands, be admitted to be just and proper. You recently tell us in your preface, that your reasons for not answering such calls were, that you might not be involved in personal controversy; that you must have "*spoken with great freedom*," and "set down as a grave moral offence, the disingenuousness so common at the present day, which, under pretence of maintaining old opinions, so disguises and discolours them, that they can with difficulty be recognized." But if such be the fact in regard to your opponents, why not prove this to the world, by adducing legitimate and satisfactory evidence? In such an age and such a country as ours, where every thing may be and must be examined, it is presuming pretty largely on the public credulity, to suppose that assertions will stand for arguments, and high and exasperated denunciation, for patient labor of investigating and proving in detail. It is what neither yourself, nor any other man in America, has any right to claim or expect.

But besides those doctrines of the Orthodox which have been misrepresented and misunderstood, there are others, no doubt, which are opposed and denied in the very respects in which we believe them to be true.

I proceed, however, with my remarks of a more general nature. In the present state of conviction and feeling among the Orthodox, which results from examination and full persuasion, it cannot be rationally expected, that we should accede to every contradiction of our principles, or succumb to every tempest that assaults us. *There is one way, and one only, to annihilate all the Orthodoxy of the State; and this is, to show by the fair and established laws of interpretation, that the Bible does not support it.* All else will fail of its end. We do in good faith believe that the Bible is the word of God; and that it is our supreme, authoritative, infallible, and only guide. We cannot be convinced, therefore, that it is our duty to relinquish what we regard as its plain and unequivocal decisions, in order to embrace what we

regard as the speculations of men, and the maxims of fashionable philosophy. We do not concede the propriety of allowing *a priori* notions and assertions, to take the place of what the sacred writers have decided. We are not acquainted with any man, whose word is law or gospel to us. We would receive no apothegms, because they are asserted with an air of confidence, and in glowing and vehement language, or in eloquent strains. A man to enjoy our religious confidence, must give some good evidence that he loves, and reverences, and has deeply studied his Bible. We submit implicitly to Paul, and Peter, and others like them; but in all other cases, we stop to ask the *why* and the *wherefore*.

Sir, you have mistaken the orthodox community of Massachusetts. They care as little for bringing in the dark ages as you do. They are a great deal farther from commending the faith of those who are laboring to extend the superstitions of Rome in our community than yourself, if the softened tones in which you speak of the advocates of these superstitions, are to be taken as the index of your feelings.

Nor are the Orthodox to be diverted from their purpose, by language of severe reproach and unmeasured indignation. The sons of those, who left country and kindred to brave the storms of the ocean in frail barks, to face the gloomy horrors of the wintry blasts and storms in a savage land and in a boundless forest, and who did all this cheerfully that they might hold fast their orthodox faith, and worship God according to it—the sons of such men, holding to the same principles, and believing them to be the only foundation of their eternal hopes—are not to be diverted from their course by obloquy and denunciation, however eloquent and severe. With them, religion is all. The world and all its concerns vanish into insignificance, when it comes into comparison with the “glory that is to be revealed.” It cannot be expected, then, if they are in any measure what they profess to be, that they should be overawed or daunted by denunciation or opposition. No Sir; these will not accomplish the

purpose at which they aim. It is not that the Orthodox are insensible to what their fellow beings think and say of them. Far from this. There is much more sensibility among them on this subject than I could wish. I cannot withhold my hearty commendation, however, of very many of them, for checking these feelings, and putting restraint upon them. But still, they know when they are mal-treated. They know when their rights are denied under cover of law; when they are excluded from the literary and civil privileges and offices of the State; when they are jeered at in private circles, and pointed at with the finger of scorn in public. With all this they have borne, and borne long; I do not say that they have always done this with such patience and meekness as became them. I am afraid that this is not the case. But depend on it, Sir, there is a secret flame kindled in this Commonwealth, by such measures as I have named above on your part and that of your friends, which, though smothered long, cannot always be smothered. Justice, and fairness, and equality of rights, must at last become the order of the day. Well will it be for the peace of this community, if the season when this shall take place should ~~not~~ be long protracted. There is always danger in a smothered sense of injustice and oppression; above all when this is the fact with respect to great numbers who ~~belong~~ to the leading class of men in the community; danger to those who feel it, as well as to others. May heaven avert its consequences from our beloved Commonwealth!

I shall be entirely misunderstood, if I am supposed to utter these things *in terrorem*. I know well that our opponents are not men to be influenced in this way. It is the last method that I should adopt, in order to influence them. I say these things merely as one who loves his country and his Commonwealth, and the happy form of government under which he lives, and who fears the consequences of any thing which may have a tendency to disturb our peace. But the time has come, when the whole truth should be openly told.

Depend on it, Sir, there is a smothered sense of deep injury among the Orthodox, both of civil and religious injury, which needs to be allayed by a return to the principles of justice, and equal rights, and kind discussion, on the part of those who are striving to crush them. We look to Switzerland; we see the wandering exile pastors there thrust out from their country, or languishing in dungeons, and their families begging their bread, because these dauntless heralds of salvation have dared to preach Christ and him crucified. We cannot help knowing that Unitarianism has done this; and consequently we are slow to receive professions of *liberality*, as certain evidence of its existence. We *fear* that there are not wanting in our own State, some who would not scruple to walk in the steps of their Liberal Brethren abroad; some whose standing argument against our principles is, that Calvin burned Servetus; but who unluckily have never read the ecclesiastical history of Geneva in the nineteenth century. Far, very far, are we from reproaching the Unitarians as a body, in our State, with such views and wishes. On the contrary, we do verily believe that a few of the more intolerant among them, are altogether deceived as to the feelings of their brethren. We do not believe that the majority are prepared for those *ultra* measures, to which they are occasionally urged. They would abhor the idea of oppressing and abusing us, would they but candidly and patiently examine the whole matter. We must still hope that they will do this, before they proceed to further measures; and that after all, the present appearances in our State, which are portentous of storm and tempest, will be dissipated, and unclouded sunshine follow. At least we hope this. And that this great end may be accomplished, we would earnestly beseech all who love the peace and prosperity of society and the church, to direct their fervent unceasing supplications to Him, who "maketh the winds and the waves to obey his voice," who is "King of kings and Lord of lords," who is "seated at the

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right hand of the Majesty on high," and is **GOD OVER ALL AND BLESSED FOREVER.**

I am, my dear Sir, notwithstanding my difference of sentiment and feeling, with much respect, and with the most sincere wishes for your happiness in time and eternity,

Your friend and obedient servant,

MOSES STUART.

Andover, July, 1830.

